

8 September 1959

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EXTENT OF SOVIET PROPAGANDA SUPPORT FOR THE REBELLION IN LAOS

Moscow propaganda to date has contained no statement of direct support for the rebel forces in Laos: that is, there has been no enunciation of the "support" or "sympathy" of the Soviet government or people for the rebel cause. ("The USSR's" and "the Soviet government's" support of the CPR was made explicit during the Taiwan Strait crisis of Fall 1958, and the "Soviet people's" support has been proffered the Algerian rebels.)

There has been no effort to arouse popular sentiment in the Soviet Union in behalf of the Lao rebels by means of mass meetings or protest movements such as were organized in support of the UAR during the Suez crisis. The Soviet radio audience has heard no more than its normal quota of Moscow's propaganda on Laos.

Neither Khrushchev nor any other Soviet leader has commented publicly on the Laotian situation to date. Moscow's only official pronouncement has been a Soviet Foreign Ministry statement (17 August), which in effect endorses the rebellion but refrains from actually pledging Soviet support of the rebels.

Soviet approval of the rebel actions has, however, been conveyed indirectly in Moscow propaganda's characterization of the Laotian situation:

a. The propaganda line is typified by the 17 August Foreign Ministry statement (broadcast some 30 times worldwide by Radio Moscow), which sees the Laotian events as posing "a serious threat of civil war." The statement calls the rebellion a spontaneous popular uprising against the Sananikone government brought about by that government's illegal repressive measures against the former Pathet Lao forces and their political party, the Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX).

The statement makes it clear, without actually saying so, that the USSR regards the rebel actions as fully justified: It accuses the Lao government--with regard to the measures it has taken against the "Laotian patriots"--of "grossly violating" its obligations under the 1954 Geneva Agreements, of depriving the former Pathet Lao forces of their "legitimate rights" under the Vientiane agreements, and of defying "the will of the people" as expressed in the May 1958 elections.

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Moscow comment in general has taken the same position. It has made clear the USSR's attitude that the rebel forces in Laos have just cause for their actions, but has encouraged the rebellion only to the extent of demanding that the Lao government desist in its repressive measures against the NLH and the former Pathet Lao troops.

b. Indirect Soviet support for the rebellion is also inherent in Moscow's backing of the Hanoi and Peking propaganda campaign against alleged U.S. efforts to bolster the Sananikone government.

c. Taken as a whole, Moscow's propaganda is thus clearly at the service of the Lao rebels to the degree that it helps create a climate of opinion in which the United States would find it embarrassing to intercede openly in the Lao "civil war" and to the degree that (in backing Peking's and Hanoi's charges) it keeps alive the possibility of active communist bloc counteraction.

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- 2 -



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